

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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IN RE: :
:
THE EL FARO INCIDENT OFF THE: NTSB Accident No.
COAST OF THE BAHAMAS ON : DCA16MM001
OCTOBER 1, 2015 :
:
-----:

INTERVIEW OF: CDR [REDACTED]
OSCS

Tuesday,
October 13, 2015

USCG Seventh District Command Center
Miami, Florida

BEFORE :

JON FURUKAWA, NTSB
DENNIS BRYSON, ABS
PATTY FINSTERBUSCH, TOTE Services
PAUL WEBB, U.S. Coast Guard

PRESENT ON BEHALF OF THE INTERVIEWEE:

CDR [REDACTED] U.S. Coast Guard JAG Corps

This transcript was produced from audio provided by the National Transportation Safety Board.





TABLE OF CORRECTIONS TO TRANSCRIPT OF INTERVIEW FOR

CDR [REDACTED]

TAKEN ON

13 October 2015

PAGE NUMBER	LINE NUMBER	CURRENT WORDING	CORRECTED WORDING
3	24	Ensign	Incident
8	23	plus a	every
9	9	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
9	9	Cockshall	Coggeshall
9	15	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
9	16	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
9	17	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
9	22	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
10	19	who's also what we're looking	who we are also looking
13	16	once the resources, the watch	with existing resources. Once the watch
13	20	Team, bring	Team, to bring
13	25	This would be,	The
14	1	management would	management team would
14	3	depending.	depending on the situation.
14	5	impact,	impact the district or its sectors,
14	11	caseload.	case load.
14	13	probably would bring	probably bring
14	24	And since this was going to, looks, since	And since
15	25	area command where	Area Command Meeting where
20	3	law enforcement	Law Enforcement
20	8	laid out	lay down
20	22	Incident Management	Incident Management Team
21	6	high	high profile
25	9	into	into our
25	11	we'll	they will
25	17	Cockshall	Coggeshall
26	3	Cockshall who are	Cockshall who was
26	4	that	those
28	15	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
28	16	at that the	at the

28	17	optimal	optimal air support.
28	22		
28	23		
29	1	aviation	aviation rep.
29	4	Cockshall.	Coggeshall
29	23	rescue with	rescue case with
30	6	as a mutual	as mutual
37	2	do some broadcasts	to do some broadcasts
37	8	ensure.	ensure they are done.
37	17	might effective	might be effective
39	10	coordination.	coordination needed to be done.
40	5	during day	during the day
40	24	are, you know,	require a lot of work, such as

If, to the best of your knowledge, no corrections are needed kindly circle the statement "no corrections needed" and initial in the space provided.

NO CORRECTIONS NEEDED. _____
Initials



Printed Name of Person providing the above information

Signature of Person providing the above information

Date

TABLE OF CORRECTIONS TO TRANSCRIPT OF INTERVIEW FOR

TAKEN ON

PAGE NUMBER	LINE NUMBER	CURRENT WORDING	CORRECTED WORDING
6	2	Cockshall	Coggeshall
6	14	Igansic	GANTSEC
7	19	CAC	CIC
8	2	CDL	CDO
9	9	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
9	9	Cockshall	Coggeshall
9	15	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
9	16	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
9	17	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
9	22	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
10	9	[REDACTED] Cockshall	[REDACTED] Coggeshall
18	13	Was	we
18	14	DOU	The OU
18	16	DSU	The SU
21	25	Closet	closest
22	14	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
22	15	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
22	19	Provision	position
23	21	AOI	AOR
25	17	Cockshall	Coggeshall
26	3	Cockshall	Coggeshall
28	15	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
29	4	Cockshall	Coggehsall

If, to the best of your knowledge, no corrections are needed kindly circle the statement "no corrections needed" and initial in the space provided.

NO CORRECTIONS NEED.

Initials

OSCS

Printed Name of Person providing the above information

[Redacted Signature]

Signature of Person providing the above information

04 Nov 2015

Date

OMS Transcript Errata 5.27.15

P-R-O-C-E-E-D-I-N-G-S

(10:40 a.m.)

MR. FURUKAWA: Okay. It is Tuesday, October 13, 2015. It is 10:40 in the morning, and we're here at the District 7 Command Center in Miami, Florida to interview Commander [REDACTED]

CDR [REDACTED] [REDACTED]

MR. FURUKAWA: [REDACTED] and Operations Specialist Senior Chief [REDACTED] Commander [REDACTED]

--

CDR [REDACTED] [REDACTED]

MR. FURUKAWA: [REDACTED] --

CDR [REDACTED] Yes, sir.

MR. FURUKAWA: -- is the Command Center Chief, and Senior Chief [REDACTED] is the Command Center Supervisor. Let's see, Commander [REDACTED] --

CDR [REDACTED] [REDACTED] with an S.

MR. FURUKAWA: Do you give your consent to being --

CDR [REDACTED] I do.

MR. FURUKAWA: -- being taped? And Senior Chief?

OSCS [REDACTED] I do.

MR. FURUKAWA: I'll just call you Commander.

CDR [REDACTED] That's fine.

1 MR. FURUKAWA: Let's see. First thing we'll
2 do is we'll go around the table to identify ourselves
3 to the transcriber. This is Jon Furukawa. I'm the
4 NTSB and I'm the Chairman of the Survival Factors
5 Group.

6 MS. FINSTERBUSCH: Patricia Finsterbusch
7 from TOTE Service, member of the Survival Factors
8 Group.

9 MR. BRYSON: Dennis Bryson, representing
10 American Bureau of Shipping, Gulf District Manager

11 MR. FURUKAWA: Also for the Survival Factors
12 Group.

13 MR. WEBB: I'm Paul Webb, the U.S. Coast
14 Guard D17. I'm the Coast Guard rep for the Survival
15 Factors Group.

16 CDR [REDACTED] Commander [REDACTED] I'm the
17 Coast Guard legal representative for the Coast Guard
18 witnesses.

19 MR. FURUKAWA: Okay. And Commander, why
20 don't you go ahead and state your name, spell it out
21 and your job.

22 CDR [REDACTED] It's Commander [REDACTED]
23 [REDACTED], last name [REDACTED]. I'm the Deputy
24 Ensign Management Chief and also the Command Center
25 Chief.

1 My role and responsibility is incident
2 management for the district, ensuring any type of
3 crisis or things that require an extended amount of
4 resources, that we provide those appropriate resources
5 so the Coast Guard can respond appropriately. And also
6 the Command Center Chief role where I have overall
7 management of performance and the personnel that are
8 inside the Command Center.

9 MR. FURUKAWA: Okay. How many years'
10 experience do you have in the Coast Guard?

11 CDR [REDACTED] I'm at 18 years.

12 MR. FURUKAWA: Eighteen years. Okay. And
13 can you tell us about your experience in those 18 years
14 with the Coast Guard?

15 CDR [REDACTED] It's a mixed experience. The
16 two years on a Coast Guard cutter, also done numerous
17 jobs in the intelligence field, actually on the
18 intelligence watch in the Command Center here, also
19 information technology.

20 So I've done a lot with information
21 technology in Command Centers, Intelligence Centers and
22 then this job, which is the, more kind of the
23 administrative role over the Command Center. So a lot
24 of technology, a lot of people.

25 MR. FURUKAWA: Okay. And are you, for your

1 Bachelors, Coast Guard Academy or someplace else?

2 CDR [REDACTED] Coast Guard Academy.

3 MR. FURUKAWA: Any Masters degrees?

4 CDR [REDACTED] Yes. That was at Nova
5 Southeastern.

6 MR. FURUKAWA: And what's that in?

7 CDR [REDACTED] Computer information systems.

8 MR. FURUKAWA: Okay. And how old are you?

9 CDR [REDACTED] I am 42.

10 MR. FURUKAWA: Okay. And Senior Chief, can
11 you state your name, spell it.

12 OSCS [REDACTED] My full name is [REDACTED]

13 [REDACTED] So that's [REDACTED], next one, my middle
14 is [REDACTED], last name, [REDACTED], and [REDACTED]
15 [REDACTED]. I've been in the military for 25 years.

16 I served seven in the U.S. Army. So Coast
17 Guard experience since '97, so going on about 18 years.
18 I've been a, first a Telecommunications Specialist
19 since '99, then later transitioned to the OS rate in
20 2003.

21 Command Center experience, I'm going on 13
22 years with Command Centers. My functions here along
23 the same lines of Commander [REDACTED] I directly
24 supervise all the enlisted personnel in the Command
25 Center.

1 And I ensure to both the Commander and
2 through Captain Cockshall (phonetic) the daily
3 operation of the Command Center, that all the equipment
4 and all systems are working properly.

5 MR. FURUKAWA: Okay. And I forgot to ask
6 you, do you give your consent to being taped?

7 OSCS [REDACTED] I do.

8 MR. FURUKAWA: Okay. Does anybody have any
9 questions about their backgrounds?

10 MR. WEBB: Senior Chief, what other Command
11 centers were you at? This is Paul Webb.

12 OSCS [REDACTED] I've done, this is my second
13 tour at D7. So I did a previous year at D7, and I've
14 done one tour at what was called Igansic (phonetic),
15 which is San Juan, Puerto Rico. And a consecutive tour
16 at San Juan, so I've bounced. Two tours in San Juan
17 and two tours here at District 7 Miami.

18 MR. WEBB: So you've got 15 years or so
19 experience --

20 OSCS [REDACTED] I did three in Puerto Rico the
21 first time. Then I came here for four, so that's
22 seven. I went back to Puerto Rico for another tour,
23 three years, ten. I got back here in 2012. So count
24 out to now, about two and a half, yes, around about
25 close to 13 years.

1 MR. WEBB: Thirteen years in D7?

2 OSCS [REDACTED] In D7. Well, my whole career
3 has been D7.

4 MR. WEBB: D7.

5 OSCS [REDACTED] I done a cutter out of Miami
6 when the Valiant was here, and I did another cutter out
7 of Charleston. So my whole career has been D7.

8 MR. WEBB: And on the cutters you're an OS,
9 so --

10 OSCS [REDACTED] The first unit or the first
11 cutter was non rate. That was when I first joined the
12 Coast Guard. My second cutter, I was an OS. I was on
13 OS-1 aboard the Coast Guard cutter Valiant, home port
14 out of Miami, Florida when it was here.

15 MR. WEBB: Okay. Can you describe your
16 duties as a OS-1 on a cutter?

17 OSCS [REDACTED] As an OS-1, I was OSIC,
18 Operations Specialist in Charge. I ran a four man
19 shop. We were in charge of CAC and radio, which are
20 two compartments within the ship. So I was in charge
21 of pretty much the operations of the ship, responsible
22 to the Ops, Operations Officer, the XO and the CO.

23 MR. FURUKAWA: Okay. Anything else for
24 background? Okay.

25 MR. WEBB: Do you hold a SMC letter?

1 OSCS [REDACTED] I do not. So I'm qualified on
2 the watch floor all the way up through CDL. So
3 situation unit, here at D7, we have two operation unit
4 qualifications. One, search and rescue. The other
5 one's law enforcement. And then CDO, Command Duty
6 Officer.

7 MR. WEBB: SU, OU and --

8 OSCS [REDACTED] SU, OU SAR, OU LE, and CDO.

9 MR. WEBB: Okay.

10 MR. FURUKAWA: Can you say the acronyms for
11 the transcriber?

12 OSCS [REDACTED] So SU is situation unit.
13 Operations unit search and rescue, operations unit law
14 enforcement and then command duty officer.

15 MR. WEBB: Okay. This is Paul Webb.
16 Commander, do you have an SMC letter?

17 CDR [REDACTED] No, working towards that. So
18 I have the situation unit and the search and rescue.
19 So they've traditionally had the Command Center Chief
20 go straight to CDO. But to ensure we get effective
21 search and rescue training, we go through.

22 So I qualified search and rescue, stand my
23 two watches plus a month and working on LE right now.
24 So we have the extra law enforcement watch that I have
25 to qualify before CDO.

1 D7, SMC wise, still is more traditional.
2 We're looking to expand it to multiple people, from
3 myself, the aviator that's in the office, Lieutenant
4 Commander [REDACTED] and Lieutenant [REDACTED] who's the Deputy
5 Command Center Chief.

6 MR. WEBB: So you have, so how many SMCs do
7 they have?

8 CDR [REDACTED] We have Mr. Eddy (phonetic),
9 Captain [REDACTED] (phonetic), Captain Cockshall, and the
10 Chief of Staff. And Mr. Eddy was added last year and
11 then with the new Admiral, we're looking to expand to
12 add more SMCs.

13 MR. WEBB: Who is the other captain you
14 said?

15 CDR [REDACTED] Captain [REDACTED].
16 OSCS [REDACTED] Captain [REDACTED] (phonetic).
17 CDR [REDACTED] Captain [REDACTED], which is the
18 Chief of Staff here.

19 MR. WEBB: So the Chief of Staff has a
20 letter?

21 CDR [REDACTED] Yes.

22 MR. WEBB: Captain [REDACTED], on the sector, do
23 you know, right?

24 CDR [REDACTED] Correct.

25 MR. WEBB: I know her. And you got --

1 MALE PARTICIPANT: Admiral Select
2 (phonetic)?
3 CDR [REDACTED] Admiral Select.
4 OSCS [REDACTED] Three, four.
5 MR. WEBB: Yes, and what was the last one?
6 OSCS [REDACTED] Burt, Theodore, Cockshall and
7 Eddy.
8 MR. WEBB: Okay. And you're looking to
9 expand to --
10 CDR [REDACTED] Add --
11 MR. WEBB: -- your billet and possibly --
12 CDR [REDACTED] We haven't spoken with Senior
13 Chief but it's a possibility.
14 OSCS [REDACTED] Yes. So right now it's going
15 to be Commander [REDACTED] will be one addition and
16 Lieutenant Commander [REDACTED] who's the Aviation
17 Management Specialist.
18 CDR [REDACTED] And Lieutenant [REDACTED]
19 who's also what we're looking at who is the Deputy
20 Command Center Chief.
21 MR. WEBB: What's the average length of time
22 it takes to qualify in D7 positions?
23 CDR [REDACTED] About a year and a half.
24 MR. WEBB: A year and a half qualification
25 from --

1 CDR [REDACTED] From the beginning.

2 MR. WEBB: -- SU to CDO?

3 CDR [REDACTED] Correct. That's standing
4 full-time watches.

5 MR. WEBB: But that's each position. You
6 qualify in one. Then you move on to the next one --

7 OSCS [REDACTED] Yes.

8 CDR [REDACTED] Correct.

9 MR. WEBB: -- and the next one. Okay.

10 MR. FURUKAWA: This is Jon Furukawa again.
11 SMC is situation mission commander?

12 OSCS [REDACTED] No.

13 CDR [REDACTED] SAR Mission Coordinator.

14 MR. FURUKAWA: SAR Mission Coordinator,
15 okay.

16 MR. WEBB: This is Paul Webb. The SAR
17 Mission Coordinator doesn't necessarily work or go with
18 the process of qualifying in those other positions.
19 It's a job that's, that you get that designation
20 because of your position. And it's not because you're
21 qualified in other jobs.

22 CDR [REDACTED] Right. You have all the
23 responsibility.

24 MR. WEBB: Okay. I got other questions.

25 MR. FURUKAWA: Go ahead, Paul.

1 MR. WEBB: That kind of sets that up. The
2 other part I wanted to kind of set up is how you guys
3 deal with approaching storms, approaching hurricanes.
4 So I got, I came up with a few questions that I figured
5 you two are the right people to ask.

6 MR. FURUKAWA: Paul, just a sec. You know,
7 this is being taped and all. We discussed with your
8 attorney previously that, you know, don't say anything
9 that's going to, that can't be released. Okay?

10 OSCS [REDACTED] Yes.

11 MR. FURUKAWA: All right.

12 MR. WEBB: I'm pretty sure everything I got
13 is not that sensitive. Okay. Just the first question
14 I have for you is, does D7 have like a canned,
15 preplanned hurricane plan, like 90, I don't know you
16 guys, 9700 plan or something like that?

17 OSCS [REDACTED] We do. There's a, the name is
18 escaping me.

19 MR. FURUKAWA: Make sure you announce what
20 your name is before you respond.

21 OSCS [REDACTED] This is Senior Chief [REDACTED]
22 We do have a plan, a hurricane plan or natural disaster
23 plan that was recently revised. I want to say within
24 the last year it got revised. So we do have in our
25 systems a plan that deals with tropical storms or

1 significant events throughout the AOR.

2 MR. WEBB: And does that plan, does it
3 discuss how you have your Command Center watch stood
4 up? Does it make any variances for extra watch
5 standings, a surge watch, anything like that?

6 OSCS [REDACTED] It does, but in addition to
7 that plan, we have conversations among the command
8 cadre in the Command Center, looking at projected path,
9 severity of the storm. And then we make our own
10 internal decisions as to when do we augment. Do we
11 need to augment, or we can continue the operation as it
12 is right now?

13 CDR [REDACTED] The Command Center, this is
14 Commander [REDACTED] The Command Center will manage
15 all aspects of the cases that are out there and also of
16 an approaching storm once the resources, the watch
17 standers on the floor are unable to keep up with the
18 demands for managing, say a hurricane.

19 Then that's where we'll look at that IMT,
20 the Incident Management Team, bring in extra bodies to
21 help out.

22 MR. WEBB: Now is it, when you're saying IMT
23 are you saying like a full on IMT? Or are you talking
24 just kind of a surge of qualified SAR controllers?

25 CDR [REDACTED] No. This would be, incident

1 management would be a pool of people from the district.
2 And it can either be a full IMT or modified IMT,
3 depending.

4 As Senior Chief [REDACTED] said, if it's not
5 going to impact, you know, land where there might be
6 some devastation or it's more of a monitoring type
7 thing, we may bring one or two extra Incident
8 Management Team people to sit on the floor and help us
9 deal with tracking the storm and whatnot.

10 As for Command Center watch standers, that
11 would be dependent on if there's a large caseload. If
12 a storm hit an area and there was a lot of emergency
13 beacons, we would probably would bring in extra
14 watchstanders to help with managing search and rescue.

15 MR. WEBB: With this storm, what was your
16 pre-storm thought process on how you're going to man
17 the watch?

18 CDR [REDACTED] For the Command Center, it
19 was, we had the normal complement. And then for
20 Incident Management Team, there were two extra Incident
21 Management Team people that were brought it from the
22 district pool to help with some of the reporting and
23 the tracking of the storm.

24 And since this was going to, looks, since
25 all the predictions were that it was going to come near

1 the Bahamas and then clear the district, we had a small
2 two person complement.

3 MR. WEBB: Okay.

4 CDR [REDACTED] But ready to increase if need
5 be.

6 MR. WEBB: So everybody was identified?

7 CDR [REDACTED] Correct.

8 MR. WEBB: You could bring in if it got
9 worse?

10 CDR [REDACTED] Correct.

11 MR. WEBB: Okay.

12 MS. FINSTERBUSCH: This is Patty
13 Finsterbusch from TOTE Services. When did you add the
14 extra people? What was the date?

15 CDR [REDACTED] I don't know the exact date
16 for the incident management people. I'll have to look
17 at the calendar.

18 MR. WEBB: Can you explain how you
19 determined the risk? You know, we do ORM. How do you
20 guys determine the risk during that period, right
21 before that period and during the track of the storm?
22 Can you explain that process?

23 CDR [REDACTED] Yes. We set up -- again, I
24 can't remember the exact date of when it was set up.
25 But it's called an area command where the Admiral

1 starts to have all the Sector Commanders, so there's
2 six sectors in our district.

3 All those commands will start calling in
4 well before the storm is nearing any other area that we
5 may be concerned of, and that's where they start to
6 discuss all the impacts.

7 Is it going to impact marine traffic out
8 there? Do we need to send out aircraft to start doing
9 a radio broadcast to let people know of impending
10 storm's track coming.

11 So a lot of that is discussed in those types
12 of meetings where you're looking really at is it going
13 to be landfall. Is it hitting a lot of marine traffic
14 areas? How severe is the storm?

15 If it's a small storm, does it have a
16 prediction to increase? That will change a lot as to
17 how severe or what we may need to do. Are people being
18 evacuated type thing? So it's really discussed amongst
19 all the senior leadership from the Admiral to all the
20 sector commands before.

21 MR. WEBB: How frequency, and what was the
22 frequency of those meetings?

23 CDR [REDACTED] Twice a day, one at 9:00 in
24 the morning, one at 1600, which is 4:00 p.m.

25 MR. WEBB: When you have a storm like this

1 for the relief process, is the relief process changed
2 in any way when it comes to, you know, weather
3 information? Or does that change your relief process
4 when one watch is relieving another when you have a big
5 event like this that's coming?

6 OSCS [REDACTED] This is Senior Chief [REDACTED]
7 So to expand a little on what the process when it comes
8 to named storms. Because of where we are
9 geographically, we go through this process every year.

10 As soon as a system develops right outside
11 of Africa, we start tracking all of them. So we depend
12 on the forecasting provided by NOAA, the National
13 Weather Service, and the National Hurricane Center.

14 So we keep, even at the onset, as a storm is
15 developing, we keep a close eye on it. Once a storm is
16 named and we know this is going to develop into
17 something bigger, we start reporting within the command
18 via our internal process, reporting what's the forecast
19 path of the storm?

20 What is the forecast strength? Is it going
21 to impact any of our sectors within the area of
22 responsibility? Mainly Puerto Rico. Puerto Rico's
23 right in the middle of that trajectory back into the
24 United States.

25 And then we look at the obvious ones, you

1 know, anything in Florida, which would be Sector
2 Jacksonville, Miami, Key West or St. Pete. So as its
3 form progresses and develops, we increase, based on
4 what the forecast track is and the strength, we
5 increase the reporting.

6 So initially, we report internally to our
7 command to let everybody know, we have something
8 developing. Or we got something that may not
9 necessitate an IMT or any further reporting from what
10 is established.

11 So as a watch relief, it remains the same.
12 So our watch relief is very in depth because of the
13 complexity of what was do here at D7. And we've kind
14 of broken down DOU into two because of everything that
15 we do. So when we do our watch relief, all
16 watchstanders are present. DSU goes over the lay down
17 of all forces and the weather.

18 Search and Rescue Duty Officer goes over all
19 pending SAR cases and then the Law Enforcement Duty
20 Officer goes over all pending law enforcement activity.
21 Then the CDO wraps up everything with what does the
22 next operational period looks like, what's pending to
23 the command.

24 So every 12 hours when we do a watch relief,
25 every aspect is to include the weather. So not

1 necessarily we add or we decrease, but we do keep a
2 close eye from what to watch on everything, especially
3 the weather, if it's anything developing. So it's all
4 situational, especially during the hurricane season
5 where we get more, it's active.

6 MR. WEBB: What time is your watch meeting?

7 OSCS [REDACTED] We do it at 0600 and then at
8 1800, so every six. 0600 and then 18, so 6:00 a.m. and
9 6:00 p.m.

10 MR. WEBB: Okay. And CDO, is the CDO 24 or
11 12 hours?

12 OSCS [REDACTED] Senior Chief [REDACTED] It's 12
13 hours, ever 12. So we do have a live CDO present on
14 the watch floor at all times.

15 MR. WEBB: I got more. Does anybody have
16 any?

17 MR. FURUKAWA: Did you ask them how many
18 people are on watch?

19 MR. WEBB: I haven't asked that yet.

20 MR. FURUKAWA: But you are?

21 MR. WEBB: That's one of the questions.

22 MR. FURUKAWA: Okay. Go ahead.

23 MR. WEBB: I'm just hogging the show here.

24 MR. FURUKAWA: So can you tell us what your
25 normal watch, the positions normally consist of?

1 CDR [REDACTED] This is Commander [REDACTED]
2 Our watch normally will have a Command Duty Officer,
3 will have an Operations Unit law enforcement officer
4 running all the law enforcement cases. And then an
5 Operation Unit SAR watch stander which is running
6 search and rescue cases. And then the Situation Unit
7 which is again, managing all the other missions and
8 force laid out and where the assets are. So four is
9 our minimum that we will normally have on the floor.

10 MR. FURUKAWA: Okay. And they all stand on
11 12 hour watches?

12 CDR [REDACTED] Twelve hours, correct. This
13 is Commander [REDACTED] Twelve hour watches.

14 MR. FURUKAWA: And are there other people on
15 watch too that relieve them? They're standing this
16 duty for 12 hours.

17 CDR [REDACTED] Right.

18 MR. FURUKAWA: In front of the computer
19 screens or --

20 CDR [REDACTED] Correct. This is Commander
21 [REDACTED] They'll do 12 hours, they'll relieve at 12.
22 You had asked about the IMT, Incident Management, we
23 will bring in extra watch standers for search and
24 rescue depending on the case. So in this situation, we
25 doubled up our search and rescue in addition to the

1 Incident Management Team.

2 MR. FURUKAWA: Okay.

3 CDR [REDACTED] And that was on Friday that we
4 added. That's usually to ensure that we'll have one
5 person just dedicate to all the other cases. And then
6 have one watch stander that just dedicates to the high
7 case that's got a lot of work to do.

8 MR. WEBB: This is Paul Webb. Those watch
9 standers you bring in, those aren't the regular IMT
10 folks, those are SAR qualified persons.

11 OSCS [REDACTED] Senior Chief [REDACTED] So it
12 depends. We've had cases in which I don't need a
13 qualified watch stander, I really need somebody that
14 can handle the volume of the phone calls. So pretty
15 much, in that sense, any seasoned blue suiter that can
16 answer the phone call and redirect the phone calls to
17 appropriate departments within the building will just
18 help.

19 Now, when we do need a qualified watch
20 stander, we'll usually start from our own complement of
21 personnel assigned to D7. Because they're qualified
22 here, they know the procedures and they're quick to
23 come right in and take over cases. If we need to, if
24 we have an extremely complex case, we will reach out to
25 our closet sector which is Sector Miami and see if we

1 can bring people in.

2 But usually we provide them within our own
3 pool of qual'd watch standers before we go out and
4 either do a request for forces or even to the local
5 sector.

6 MR. WEBB: Okay. That answers that. This
7 is Paul Webb again. As you're planning for the
8 hurricane, who and what is the process for determining
9 the location of your assets pre-hurricane? What's the
10 process?

11 OSCS [REDACTED] Senior Chief [REDACTED] So
12 that's really complex. So everything is discussed at
13 the senior staff level to include Chief of Response
14 [REDACTED] (phonetic), Response Enforcement which is
15 [REDACTED] (phonetic), and the other departments within
16 the building.

17 To look at the forecast track of the storm
18 and then where are we going to move assets. So we try
19 to provision them somewhere where they're going to be
20 somewhat protected from the storm but be able to come
21 right behind it and resume operations. So that's one
22 of the key factors that drives where are we going to
23 move the assets.

24 We don't want to pull too far out, that it
25 will take them too long to reconvene or reconstitute

1 operations immediately past the storm. But obviously,
2 you want to protect them and you want to put them on
3 the edges of any significant storm because we can't
4 predict.

5 And again, we use the predictions from the
6 National Hurricane Center as best we can. But we can't
7 predict a path of a storm with any degree of certainty.
8 So we move them out with the expectation that, as soon
9 as a particular storm moves out, they're going to go
10 back in and resume operations.

11 So that is very carefully looked by the
12 senior staff here in the building. Because it affects
13 a lot of things, logistics, personnel movements,
14 assets. If I move them to one spot, how are we going
15 to get gas and food stores and all that? That's very
16 closely looked at by the senior level in the building
17 and then we move forward.

18 MR. WEBB: Are they predetermined FOL's that
19 you use?

20 OSCS [REDACTED] No. We don't have any
21 predetermined because the complexity of our AOI is such
22 that it doesn't really allow for that. Obviously, the
23 easy ones are one of our own sectors, Puerto Rico, Key
24 West, Miami. But then we've had storms that go into
25 the Caribbean and then we move everything up north.

1 And then we have storms that go to the north and we
2 move everything south.

3 So we don't, it's kind of hard to predict as
4 storms go north and south of what I call the Greater
5 Antilles. Either north of Puerto Rico or south of
6 Puerto Rico, everything changes.

7 MR. WEBB: This is Paul. The acronym that
8 used, AOL --

9 CDR [REDACTED] FOL, that's Forward Operating
10 Location.

11 MR. WEBB: Okay. Please, for the acronyms -
12 -

13 CDR [REDACTED] Right.

14 OCS [REDACTED] Forward Operating Location,
15 right. So the easy ones are our sectors. Sector San
16 Juan in Puerto Rico, Sector Miami, Sector Key West are
17 the easy ones and even Guantanamo Bay. We've used them
18 a lot. But it's all depending on the forecast of the
19 storm.

20 MR. WEBB: For this storm, where did you
21 predeploy?

22 OCS [REDACTED] For this storm, we were moving
23 assets to the south side of Puerto Rico and Hispanola
24 which is Dominican Republic and Haiti, getting them
25 away from the track of the storm as best we could.

1 So when we talk about the Great Antilles,
2 you've got Puerto Rico, you've got Hispanola, and then
3 you've got Cuba. So the big waterways there, the big
4 transit areas are the Mona Passage and the Windward
5 Passage in between those groups of islands. So usually
6 we use those as our highway, if you will. Move assets
7 south and then quickly move them back up.

8 CDR [REDACTED] This is Commander [REDACTED]
9 And because this storm came down and it was coming into
10 AOR towards Bahamas and then predicted to go back up,
11 there wasn't a large complicated movement where we'll
12 have their own groups and everything.

13 But in this one, we did specifically
14 designate a cutter to position itself so as the storm
15 went through, it could follow right behind and help
16 look for the El Faro. That was a plan that Captain
17 Cockshall could probably discuss more in detail.

18 So it's really case dependent on the storm
19 and also what's going on there mission wise. In this
20 situation, we obviously had a search and rescue case.

21 MR. FURUKAWA: John Furukawa. Which was
22 cutter was this that was --

23 CDR [REDACTED] This is Commander [REDACTED] I
24 believe it was the Coast Guard Cutter Resolute.

25 MR. FURUKAWA: Okay. Any other cutters?

1 CDR [REDACTED] I probably would recommend
2 speaking to the Chief of Enforcement, Captain [REDACTED]
3 (phonetic), Captain Cockshall who are more directly
4 managing all that aspects.

5 MR. FURUKAWA: Okay.

6 MR. WEBB: This is Paul Webb. How many
7 cutters were patrolling during the period that --

8 OSCS [REDACTED] Well a normal -- and I don't
9 want to get into a lot of detail because then I'll be
10 discussing sensitive items. But we do have particular
11 areas that we patrol constantly. So it's not a
12 significant amount of cutters. I can discuss it
13 offline but I don't want to do it on a recorded line
14 because it touches on sensitivities of operations and
15 all that stuff. It wasn't a significant amount.

16 MR. WEBB: So as part of the discussions
17 with the hurricane, the limits to what the helicopters,
18 C-130s, what their actual physical limits, is that
19 discussed? At what level is it discussed in the
20 command center as they're deciding what assets they
21 might be moving? Or is that pushed up the chain?

22 OSCS [REDACTED] Absolutely. This is Senior
23 Chief [REDACTED] Yes it is. It's part of our internal
24 process and we have our in-house aviation expert who we
25 confer with a lot to discuss the capabilities of the,

1 in this particular case, the aviation piece. And then
2 we have previous CO's of cutters that can provide all
3 of the insight on what the capabilities are.

4 So we do have those conversations early on
5 to determine where are we going to move assets. And if
6 they're responding, what can they actually do? Which
7 in the case of the aviation piece is not a whole lot.
8 We really, you know, we looked at that very carefully,
9 putting blue suits in harm's way when we're following a
10 storm or we're putting them close to a storm to
11 operate.

12 Because it's very significant to put an
13 asset in harm's way very easily. Our assets are not
14 designed to exceed certain parameters depending on the
15 asset. So that is very closely looked at both on the
16 watch floor initially. We make our recommendations to
17 the staff and then the staff has discussions.

18 Another thing that we do is that we call the
19 parent units. In the case of the aviation assets, we
20 call Air Station Miami, Air Station Clearwater, confer
21 with those Operational Officers and those COs on what
22 can we do with those assets. So we do have a lot of
23 discussions before we actually direct that unit to
24 actually respond.

25 But ultimately, the person on scene, whether

1 it's the aircraft commander or the skipper of one of
2 our cutters, they make that decision on how much they
3 can take or what is their response before they either
4 accept the mission or decline the mission. So it's a
5 lengthy discussion.

6 MR. BRYSON: Well I just wanted to ask --
7 this is Dennis Bryson. So you moved some surface
8 assets. Did you have to move any air assets for the
9 storm?

10 CDR [REDACTED] This is Commander [REDACTED]
11 There were some movement and pre-positioning of assets
12 prior to the storm. There was some anticipation of
13 trying to get some helicopters that were in a better
14 position. I would probably recommend Lieutenant
15 Commander [REDACTED] who is our aviation rep. He was
16 primarily responsible for looking at that the entire
17 case to try to ensure we had optimal --

18 I know general of where we kind of put
19 things and when but I'm not the best one to kind of
20 give those details.

21 MR. BRYSON: That's Lieutenant Commander

22 [REDACTED]

23 CDR [REDACTED] [REDACTED] correct.

24 MR. BRYSON: How do you spell his name?

25 CDR [REDACTED] [REDACTED] and then [REDACTED] is [REDACTED]

1 [REDACTED]. And he's our district aviation --

2 MR. BRYSON: Is he a part of DRM?

3 CDR [REDACTED] Part of DRM works for Captain
4 Cockshall.

5 MR. BRYSON: Is the Assistant DRM or --

6 CDR [REDACTED] No he's just the aviation
7 Lieutenant Commander.

8 MR. BRYSON: How many air stations work
9 directly for D7?

10 OSCS [REDACTED] We have four. This is Senior
11 Chief [REDACTED] You've got Air Station Borinquen which
12 is in Puerto Rico, Air Station Miami, Air Station
13 Clearwater which is in Clearwater, Florida, Tampa. And
14 then you've got Air Station Savannah, Georgia. We also
15 have an air facility in Charleston which is a satellite
16 of Air Station Savannah.

17 MR. BRYSON: And Clearwater is the C-130s?

18 OSCS [REDACTED] Clearwater is C-130s and 60s.
19 We have, everybody else is 65, Savannah, Borinquen, and
20 Miami.

21 CDR [REDACTED] This is Commander [REDACTED]
22 And with this case, a little different than normal
23 because we had an active search and rescue with a
24 hurricane. The discussions and the meetings were kind
25 of dual. So it was not only just hurricane response

1 but it was also search and rescue support to the El
2 Faro case.

3 So a lot of those senior level discussions
4 with the Admiral and all the commands, when they would
5 have those twice a day, they eventually just merged
6 them all at once and just made those as a mutual
7 discussions.

8 MR. WEBB: How many bravo zero helicopters
9 are available in Clearwater. It's the 60s.

10 OSCS [REDACTED] One each. One, each air
11 station has one bravo zero.

12 MR. WEBB: Okay.

13 OSCS [REDACTED] Yes. And most, I don't want
14 to say for sure but most air stations will have a B2
15 crew ready on standby. So if I use -- this is Senior
16 Chief [REDACTED] If I use a ready for any search and
17 rescue case and I know I'm going to bag them, I can
18 call the air station and tell them, hey recall your B2
19 crew as a backup. I mean, every air station has a B0
20 crew.

21 MR. BRYSON: How many helicopters does
22 Clearwater have?

23 CDR [REDACTED] We can easily collect all
24 those numbers --

25 OSCS [REDACTED] I can pull that up. I don't

1 know the number.

2 (Simultaneous speaking)

3 OSCS [REDACTED] No they have more like nine.

4 MR. BRYSON: Nine?

5 OSCS [REDACTED] Nine.

6 MR. WEBB: We'll get that.

7 OSCS [REDACTED] Yes.

8 MR. WEBB: Because of the hurricane, did you
9 look outside the district for 60 support? Or was it
10 all with Clearwater, the 60s?

11 OSCS [REDACTED] No. Usually because of the --
12 depending on the storm. This one we did not see it
13 because it was going to hit the Bahamas and take a
14 direct, going to the north, northeast. So with that --
15 and I forgot to mention, when it comes to 60s out of
16 Clearwater, we have a unit in the Bahamas, Operations
17 Bahamas, Turks and Caicos that has pre-deployed 60s out
18 of Clearwater.

19 That's why they have a significant amount,
20 because we support the Bahamas as well. So normally
21 there will be three 60s deployed in the Bahamas as
22 well. But those are not in a bravo zero status.
23 They're the not -- the mission with the Bahamas is more
24 of a law enforcement nature and support of their drug
25 interdiction efforts.

1 So they're not in a B0 capacity. A lot of
2 times we call the Bahamas and ask our (inaudible) unit
3 if they have anything available, if they haven't flown.
4 So with them, we've got to coordinate a little bit more
5 than we do with our own air stations that have a ready
6 on deck B0. So there's a particular case there.

7 MR. BRYSON: There's no expectation for them
8 --

9 OSCS [REDACTED] There's no expectation, yes.
10 We make the request to them. And they, I want to say
11 the majority of the times, they do respond. But there
12 are times where they don't have the asset available
13 because they're engaged in law enforcement operations
14 already. So we do have those helicopters pre-deployed
15 to the Bahamas.

16 MR. BRYSON: Can you explain B0, what that
17 actually --

18 OSCS [REDACTED] So B0, what that acronym is,
19 is that we have a resource that's ready to be utilized
20 within a timeframe. So B0 means we have a crew ready,
21 just standing by for a launch order. That's what B0
22 means. So at any moment, I can call them and they have
23 30 minutes in order to do their pre-planning brief, get
24 on the aircraft and get it airborne.

25 MR. FURUKAWA: Are there other standbys

1 besides B0s, like a B1 hour or something.

2 MR. WEBB: The B2.

3 OSCS [REDACTED] The B2. So there's a B2,
4 bravo two. B2 means two hours. So B is bravo. When
5 it comes to our Coast Guard's internal asset, when we
6 talk about bravo, it's that the asset is not being
7 utilized at this moment but it's in a ready state.

8 MR. FURUKAWA: Okay.

9 OSCS [REDACTED] Any asset that is flying or
10 deployed underway is called an alpha. So they are on
11 the way or moving. Any asset that's in charlie status
12 is out of commission for a particular period,
13 maintenance or it's broke for parts or something like
14 that.

15 So bravo means the asset is ready. Zero
16 meaning it can go within 30 minutes.

17 MR. FURUKAWA: Okay. Anybody else? When it
18 comes to shipping traffic, you saw the AIS. As part of
19 your pre-planning, do you on the watch floor look at
20 the shipping traffic that's within the cone of the
21 hurricane? To see what's out there, what's potentially
22 going to --

23 OSCS [REDACTED] We do. And again, this is all
24 -- it's Senior Chief [REDACTED] So it's situational based
25 on the forecast track. So a lot of thought goes into

1 that. This particular storm was going to somewhat make
2 a stop in the Bahamas and then head out, outside.

3 So we look at who is out there and where are
4 they going. And like Commander [REDACTED] said earlier,
5 in a lot of cases we will put a C-130 aircraft out
6 there just to make, in the blind broadcast passing
7 weather information to all mariners.

8 Obviously we don't know who is listening and
9 who is not. So we do that. If we somebody that's in
10 the path of the storm or in danger of doing something,
11 we will try to establish comms with that unit and
12 advise them of what's going on and where they're going.

13 However, a big percentage of that is not
14 successful because there's no way for the aircraft to
15 make that vessel comply with them to talk. So we put a
16 C-130 out, they make these broadcasts providing weather
17 information. But there's no way for us to know how
18 many people actually heard the broadcast, deviated
19 course, or at least heard it and made their own
20 determinations on whether we're going to go.

21 MR. WEBB: Speaking of weather broadcasts,
22 during the approach of a hurricane, the scheduled
23 weather broadcasts -- and I know you guys don't do them
24 in the command center. Do you know if that schedule
25 becomes smaller, shorter? Or do they do emergency

1 broadcasts?

2 OCS [REDACTED] I do not. This is Senior
3 Chief [REDACTED] Because the regular scheduled broadcast
4 is handled by the sectors. We don't have that
5 visibility on how they manage it.

6 MR. WEBB: How about the HF out at comm comm
7 or whatever they call it now?

8 OCS [REDACTED] Oh they new (inaudible)? I
9 don't know the new master radio. I have no idea what
10 they're reporting (inaudible). I couldn't say if they
11 made any adjustments for this particular storm or not.
12 I do know that a lot of weather information goes out
13 NAVTEX which is received by all major shipping.

14 But I don't know if, once a storm is named,
15 I don't know how often they put those out. I don't
16 know if it's scheduled or if they have a frequency
17 change on that broadcast. We don't see, here in the
18 Command Center, we don't see the NAVTEX broadcast and
19 we don't -- sectors handle the actual VHF broadcast.
20 So we don't see it.

21 MR. FURUKAWA: John Furukawa, NTSB. You
22 said you'll fly out a C-130 and the C-130 will do radio
23 broadcasts. Is that on VHF --

24 OCS [REDACTED] On VHF channel 16, on the
25 international distress radio frequency. So they'll

1 just put out a broadcast in the blind advising
2 everybody out there, hey this is what's coming.

3 CDR [REDACTED] Before you answer, just wait for
4 the question to end. We're getting a lot of overlap
5 from your responses.

6 MR. FURUKAWA: And that's something that's
7 normally done? And did you guys control them to do
8 that or they do it on their own?

9 OCS [REDACTED] Senior Chief [REDACTED] So
10 that's a conversation we have with the air station. We
11 don't necessarily control the aircraft when it goes up.
12 We tell them what we're looking for and they usually
13 fly in an area along the shipping lanes just making a
14 broadcast. So that's more of a unit decision that we
15 actually tell them I want you to fly this specific box.

16 MR. FURUKAWA: Okay.

17 OCS [REDACTED] And do that.

18 MR. FURUKAWA: And was that done for the
19 hurricane --

20 MS. FINSTERBUSCH: Joaquin.

21 OCS [REDACTED] Joaquin.

22 MR. FURUKAWA: Joaquin.

23 CDR [REDACTED] This is Commander [REDACTED]
24 Yes it was being planned. Again, Lieutenant Commander
25 [REDACTED] was the one that was setting up that with

1 working with, I think Clearwater to get the C-130s out
2 there, do some broadcasts. And I believe when all that
3 was happening, this case kind of popped up. So we had
4 some assets already out there doing that. But he would
5 be perfect to kind of go in those details of exactly
6 what they did and where they do it.

7 But it's normally, the district will push
8 requirements to ensure. A lot of times, like Senior
9 Chief said, the air stations are looking for that
10 anyway because they know they're going to be on tap to
11 kind of provide that. So they'll work together and
12 figure out where they want to fly, when they want to
13 fly ahead of the storm.

14 MR. FURUKAWA: So it's a routine thing
15 that's all done?

16 CDR [REDACTED] Routine depending on where the
17 storm is and where we think it might effective.

18 MR. FURUKAWA: They know they have to do it?
19 Do the air stations know that they're going to have to
20 send a C-130 and do it?

21 CDR [REDACTED] It's usually something that
22 the district will request if we're able to, depending
23 on the situation. If a storm pops up in the middle of
24 nowhere, which they do, case depending.

25 MR. FURUKAWA: Okay.

1 MR. WEBB: This is Paul Webb again. The
2 broadcast that they do, do they do it on VHF and HF?
3 Or do they just strictly do VHF marine band?

4 OSCS [REDACTED] Senior Chief [REDACTED] Do you
5 mean the C-130 aircraft?

6 MR. WEBB: Yes.

7 OSCS [REDACTED] I don't know. I don't know
8 the answer to that.

9 CDR [REDACTED] This is Commander [REDACTED]
10 Commander [REDACTED] would be the best person as the
11 aviation lead.

12 MR. WEBB: Looks like we'll have to talk to
13 him. That's kind of all I had on my there, my list of
14 questions.

15 MR. FURUKAWA: Okay. Do you have anything
16 else?

17 MR. BRYSON: And I have no more questions.

18 MR. FURUKAWA: Okay. Let's see. Okay. At
19 the end of an interview, we like to ask the interviewee
20 if there's anything they'd like to say, you know,
21 something we should have asked you.

22 CDR [REDACTED] This is Commander [REDACTED]
23 The one thing that I did want to mention was Friday
24 morning, probably around 0700 we determined that with
25 the amount that was going on with this case, that it

1 would be best to double up our search and rescue watch
2 which I actually stepped in. I took all the other SAR
3 cases and the other person that was on watch took the
4 El Faro case.

5 And then, as the Command Center Chief
6 working with Lieutenant [REDACTED] who is my Deputy
7 and also Senior, then we basically staffed out through
8 the following Thursday to have two watch standers
9 during the day when the majority of the planning,
10 coordination.

11 And then our plan was that, if we thought
12 the case would go longer, we'd just keep doubling the
13 watch standers. And that was more of a best practice
14 to ensure that someone could just focus on one case and
15 not be distracted by the high volume of cases that we
16 typically have down here.

17 MR. FURUKAWA: So from the normal four
18 people, what was the highest number of people that were
19 here standing watches during Hurricane Joaquin?

20 CDR [REDACTED] This is Commander [REDACTED]
21 Officially we had, starting Friday morning during the
22 day watches to have five people.

23 MR. FURUKAWA: Okay.

24 CDR [REDACTED] And then there was also the
25 two Incident Management people that were there that are

1 not Command Center qualified people. They're there
2 managing the hurricane aspects and all the other
3 reporting to help. We try to utilize them as much as
4 possible. So that's the IMT which they had two and
5 then we had five during day and the normal four at
6 night.

7 MR. WEBB: One thing I forgot to ask. This
8 is Paul Webb. How many SAR cases were active on the
9 floor when the El Faro case started?

10 CDR [REDACTED] This is Commander [REDACTED] I
11 would have to go back to look exactly because the
12 volume of cases can go from zero to seven and then five
13 hours later it goes down to one.

14 MR. WEBB: Right. But when they got the
15 report from the El Faro, how many other cases were
16 going on?

17 CDR [REDACTED] I'd have to double check.
18 Approximately two or three that might have been going
19 on.

20 MR. WEBB: You don't have, you don't know?

21 OSCS [REDACTED] I don't have --

22 CDR [REDACTED] Because a lot of cases are, as
23 they develop, you might have a lot that are not cased
24 out but are, you know, five EPIRBs.

25 MR. WEBB: Can I get? Because those are in

1 a MISLE number to each of those.

2 CDR [REDACTED] Correct.

3 MR. WEBB: That's really all I need on that
4 and then I can, we can pull that data.

5 CDR [REDACTED] This is Commander [REDACTED] We
6 have an ops, an operation summary that will show you
7 what we had --

8 MR. WEBB: Okay.

9 CDR [REDACTED] -- at each watch, what's the
10 caseload.

11 MR. WEBB: All right.

12 CDR [REDACTED] Starting from what time?

13 MR. WEBB: Basically I'm looking for when
14 the El Faro case started, when they got the initial
15 notification on that. So that's our center point right
16 there. So cases that were just ongoing during that
17 period, just to know what they were dealing with when
18 they got that phone call.

19 CDR [REDACTED] So that's about 0700 on
20 Friday?

21 MR. WEBB: I'd say 30 September through the
22 week. Right? Because the call came in on 0700.

23 MR. FURUKAWA: On the 1st.

24 MS. FINSTERBUSCH: On the 1st.

25 MR. WEBB: So probably the day before.

1 MR. FURUKAWA: Okay. Anything else Paul?

2 MR. WEBB: No. I think I'm -- that was all
3 the questions I have written down.

4 MR. FURUKAWA: Okay. And Senior Chief,
5 anything you'd like to add?

6 OSCS [REDACTED] Nothing at this time.

7 MR. FURUKAWA: Okay. Anybody else? Okay.
8 It's 11:28 and we're ending the interview with
9 Commander [REDACTED] and Senior Chief [REDACTED]

10 (Whereupon, the above-entitled matter went
11 off the record at 11:28 a.m.)
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C E R T I F I C A T E

MATTER: El Faro Incident
Accident No. DCA16MM001
Interview of [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]
Miami, FL

DATE: 10-13-15

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